



Flat Top Tower – Moses H. Cone Memorial Park, NC

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
5.3 mls	★	N/A	★	★	N/A
Hiking Time:	2 hours and 15 minutes with 30 minutes of break				
Elev. Gain:	584 ft				
Parking:	Park at Flat Top Manor. 36.14928, -81.69288				

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)



By Trail Contributor: Zach Robbins

Any hike at Moses H. Cone Memorial Park packs many views into relatively easy terrain and mileage for the Blue Ridge Mountains. Located just outside of Blowing Rock on the Blue Ridge Parkway, this estate was donated to the National Park Service in 1949 after the death of Bertha Cone. Prior to being controlled by the NPS, Moses Cone and his wife retired to this estate building over 20 miles of carriage trails, three lakes, and an observation tower on the highest point in the estate, Flat Top Mountain.

Today the park is an excellent destination for hikers, horseback rides, and motorists. The carriage trails are all immaculately maintained and well-graded. None of the hikes in the park are difficult so it is perfect for the family and casual hikers. This hike starts at Flat Top Manor and winds through picturesque forest and fields for 2.6 miles to the observation tower on Flat Top Mountain. You will be treated to incredible views from a meadow near Cone Cemetery and 360° views from Flat Top Tower. Moses H. Cone Memorial Park is an outstanding introduction to the Blue Ridge Mountains for the family.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – Hike begins at the parking lot for Flat Top Manor. You can pick up a free map in the house and explore the displays. The house has a grand porch overlooking Bass Lake and the lower elevations of the park. Go left following the paved trail towards the Blue Ridge Parkway.
- ▶ **Mile 0.2** – Pass through a stone tunnel under the Blue Ridge Parkway. On the other side of the tunnel the trail splits. The trail on the left leads to Trout Lake and Rich Mountain. Stay right to follow Flat Top Road. The carriage road winds gently through forest.
- ▶ **Mile 1.0** – Enter a vast meadow and intersect a spur trail on the left to Cone Cemetery. Turn left for a short side trip.
- ▶ **Mile 1.1** – Pass through a ring of trees surrounding the Cone Cemetery, the grave is enclosed by a fence and there is a plaque on the back side documenting the life of Moses Cone. The trail continues beyond the trees and connects back with the main trail.
- ▶ **Mile 1.2** – Reconnect with Flat Top Rd which winds gracefully through the meadow. You will spot multiple side footpaths taking the short route straight up the hill. Avoid these footpaths, they are not part of the trail system and cause erosion. Instead enjoy the longer, easier route on the carriage trail. On this stretch you will get fantastic views southwest of Rich Mountain, Grandfather Mountain, Sugar Mountain, and Hanging Rock. Towards the east you will see the houses of Blowing Rock dotting the hills.
- ▶ **Mile 1.5** – Leave the meadow and enter the forested southern slope of Flat Top Mountain.
- ▶ **Mile 1.9** – Pass through a thick section of rhododendron, a small outcrop on the right offers a view of Blowing Rock.
- ▶ **Mile 2.0** – A stone wall lines the trail and leads to a wide open view to the southeast of Blowing Rock.
- ▶ **Mile 2.7** – Trail ends at the forested summit of Flat Top Mountain. Flat Top Tower adorns the summit. This tower was originally built in 1900 from wood but after severe deterioration was torn down and the present day 40-foot Aermotor tower was built in 1954. This tower is always open, climb the stairs for the fantastic 360° views from the top.

Due southwest Grandfather Mountain dominates the surroundings. The mountain impressively rises over the region and this is one of the best views you will find of Calloway Peak. Immediately to the right of Grandfather Mountain the condominium building on Sugar Mountain is plainly visible with the pointed summit of Hanging Rock to the right. The Roan Highlands can be spotted in the distant west between Sugar Mountain and Hanging Rock. On the right of Hanging Rock in the northwest you will see the elongated ridgeline and ski slopes of Beech Mountain. To the north the high, rugged peaks of the Amphibolite Range rise above Boone and the Watauga Valley. The sharp topped peak on the left is Snake Mountain and the large rounded peak in the center is Elk Knob, the two tallest mountains in the range. On a clear day you may be able to spot Mt. Rogers in Virginia far north. Blowing Rock lies far below the summit to the southeast. Due south you will see the large meadow with Cone Cemetery, the peaks of Linville Gorge are visible in the distance.

- ▶ **Mile 5.3** – Hike ends at Flat Top Manor parking lot.